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Belief that all school learning is influenced by the teacher's feeling for the student, by the teacher's cultural evaluation of the student, by cultural motivation and by intrinsic value in the curriculum led to the following recommendations to help the culturally deprived student: study of the community, and of the school in-service training of teachers, new materials in reading and in all phases of the curriculum, new teaching methods and integration of all groups into both classroom and extra-classroom activities.

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SOCIETY, THE SCHOOL AND THE CULTURALLY DEPRIVED STUDENT

by

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Nearly fifteen years ago, in an address to the General Session of the American Association of School Administrators, I pointed out that our efficiency as a nation, and the preservation of our position vis-a-vis the Communist powers depended largely upon our learning how to motivate and teach the lower socio-economic groups in our schools. For our national survival, the most important fact about our low economic groups is that they include more pupils with high I.Q.'s than do the middle economic groups. The reason is that the great majority of our pupils come from the lower soci economic groups. In New York, Chicago, or Detroit, about 70% of all public school students come from the working families. On the other hand, only 30% of our school populations in the large industrial cities come from the white-collar, business, and professional families. (Even this proportion is being reduced by the migration of the middle and higher socio-economic groups to the suburbs.)

In America, we have one way and only one way to get the complex work of our industry, business, science, and government accomplished at an increasingly efficient level with each generation. That method is literally the recruitment of able and ambitious people from the workingclass level into the middle levels, which are the levels of the engineer, the scientist, the managerial group in industry and in education, and the teachers.

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As a nation, we must have the brains and work of these people who move up from the working familes into the lower socio-economic groups. Any school program which does not encourage this marjority group, which does not discover the ability in these millions of pupils, and which does not help develop and guide these able students into productive skills and jobs in our economy is handicapping us in a race against time.

Sputnik I shook our complacency about our competion with the Communist world. As a nation, however, we apparently have not realized that a nation which does not develop an effective program for educating the children of two thirds or more of its population is inviting disaster. We are greatly outnumbered. The only way we can keep ahead or abreast in this race is by finding and using a higher proportion of our able people in the lower socio-economic groups.

The most serious error we could make as a nation, and as educators, would be to believe that the less than half of our population which is in the middle and higher economic groups can furnish enough scientists, engineers, teachers, production-men and skilled workers to enable us to maintain our world position. We not only shall need the able children from the southern white or Negro groups, the northern low-income groups and the foreign born. We must have them; our survival depends upon our ability to train them. So anyone who has the idea that the school can drag its feet with these groups had better reexamine his view of the future, the immediate future. The question is now a matter of how many such people we can develop within the next ten years.

II

A young and hopeful teacher, trained in our best colleges and universities, often undergoes an emotional trauma when she or he has begun teaching in a situation where the majority of students are from families of the lower socio-economic groups. Many new (and old) teachers find it impossible to understand the attitudes and values of these pupils; they are puzzled by the students' reactions to the material and to the instructor, and by their often sullen, resentful behavior. Such teachers, coming from middle class backgrouds and from highly academic training in colleges and universities, experience a cultural shock owing to the great difference between their own training and academic goals and those of most of their students. The result, in many cases, is bewilderment, followed by disillousionment and apathy.

Today, in our cities, the problems of educating the masses of the students are intensified by migration from the South (and from Mexico and Puerto Rico). One fundamental social process has created the United States. That life-giving process has been migration. The migrations from Europe, and the forced migration from Africa supplied our basic population. The internal migration from the Eastern states to the West developed our country.

Starting with the First World War, when migration from Europe was sharply reduced, the internal migration from the farm to the city, and from the South to the North and West became the major factor in the industrial expansion of our country. The basic cause

of this migration was the need of northern industry for unskilled and semi-skilled labor which they had formerly obtained from Europe.

All these migrations were regarded as unwelcome and socially destructive by the groups which had arrived at an earlier date and which had become partially acculturated. After they had spent just one generation in America, those who had come here to escape persecution or failure in Europe feared and resented the next wave of immigrants. Those of English origin regarded the Irish and Germans, rejected the Swedes, and so on. With the bone-wrenching, heart-twisting impact of the strange, crooked, complex city upon the migrant and his family, it is no surprise that many of them suffered an emotional and psychological trauma. (Between 1920 and 1960 the northern Negro had the highest rate in the United States for commitment owing to mental illness.)

The flight from the South to the North and West has been the largest internal migration in the modern world. Its history has not yet been written. We do not understand its sweep, and power, and its almost infinite complexity, nor the struggle, and victory and death of the millions who, without a leader, left their homes in Egypt for forty cruel but necessary years in the Wilderness. These writers in the future who attempt to understand this endless series of migrations from the South will gain an epic view, I am certain, of an almost super-human effort of peoples who uprooted themselves, and in millions of cases sacrificed themselves so that their children might have a better chance.

III

The future of our nation industrially and socially depends upon the ability of the schools to help large numbers of children from working class families to learn the basic skills essential both to social and economic life. The schools have not yet learned how to give this training effectively. The major cause of this failure is the conflict between the middle-class values and goals of the school and the cultural pattern of the families and students in the lower socio-economic group. Before attempting to develop new approaches to this problem within the school, we need a clear and specific knowledge of the behavior and values which the students in the lower economic groups learn from their families and peers. Unless we know how the culture of the family and gang motivate the student we shall not be able to change his motivation so that he will learn either the old curriculum which we have or the new curriculum which we hope to develop.

More than 95 out of every 100 teachers are from the middle socio-economic groups. The teachers, therefore, come from a cultural way of life markedly different from that of the majority (60-70 per cent) of the pupils. Many teachers, as a result, do not understand the behavior and goals of the lower socio-economic group of pupils. The lower socio-economic group of pupils, on the other hand, do not understand, and therefore do not have the motivation to learn the teacher's culture.

What about the parents? The usual parent in each social level is preparing his child for the kind of life (the types of manners of work, of sexual controls, and of education) which is approved and desired by their social level. From his birth, therefore, the preparation of the middle class child is more systematic and more complex.

The middle class child is trained in a cultural world which demands fast and early attainment. Therefore, to speed their children through the lengthy ways of the middle class training, parents use methods which build a desire for achievement in the child himself.

In working-class families, however, the child learns to seek other pleasures and to want other types of prestige. Growing up in the street culture of blighted areas, living in tenements and kitchenettes, the child of our white and colored slums learns a characteristic pattern of ambitions, of pleasures, and habits. Not only is his organic life expressed more directly. His basic psychological responses are also less frustrated. He is allowed to fight when he is angry. Frequently he fights even his brothers and sisters. Physical aggression is regarded as normal. Because fighting is common in his family and in his neighborhood, he learns to take a blow and to give one. His parents believe that whippings are the normal way of controlling a child (or a wife). Thus he gets his thrashings regularly and learns <u>not to fear them</u>.

The lower working-class child also has his share of fear and worry, however. His family is more often struck by disease and by separation. Their chronic poverty breeds fear of eviction, and of homelessness, and the most constant of all his fears, that of starvation. On the other hand, his family and his gang teach him not to be afraid of a fight, not to be intimidated by the teacher and the police, and not to fear injury or death, as keenly as your child.

He also grows up faster, in the sense of achieving personal maturity. He is not protected from the crises of life. He sits with the ill and the dying. Even as a six-year-old, he listens to family discussions of unemployment and marital difficulties. He "lives fast" in a society where he will become a man or woman at thirteen or fourteen.

The culture of our working class also differs from that of middle class groups in its concepts of manliness and womanliness. The boy will learn to be more male: coarser, more aggressive physically, more openly sexual, than the middle-class boy. The girl will be bolder, more outspoken sexually, than the girl trained in a middle-class family.

Thus, by the time he is thirteen or fourteen, the adolescent in low-status communities has learned a deep cultural motivation which is different from that of most teachers, and regarded by them as unacceptable.

The cultural barriers between the school and the slum students may be illustrated by the following story from THE NEW JERSEY EDUCATIONAL REVIEW. It is an account of a boy from a slum family who is telling his mother of the opening day of a new school year.

"Yeah, I'm in the dummy class this time. Why did I get put there? Well, I ain't so sure. The teacher always said I had a low I.Q., but nobody noticed it till last spring, when I couldn't get along in Miss Brown's class. She gave me the test, and when I handed in my paper, she said, 'Hm, just what I thought. I knew he didn't belong in here.'

"It was something they called an intelligence test. First I thought it was just a joke. It turned out that it wasn't. You had to put crosses on pictures and circles under 'em, and lines around them, and dots over them. Well, I got sort of mixed up -- so I drew a line through the middle of all of 'em. The boy that sat next to me put 'no' on every other sentence and then filled the rest up with 'yes.' He got a swell mark.

"Now look at this one: a tree, a fish, a cake of ice. It's so funny I tore out the page and kept it. See, three pictures: a tree, a fish, and a cake of ice. I'll read what it tells you to do: 'John is ten years old, and his sister Mary is eight. If John is not Mary's brother, draw a line from the fish to the cake of ice. If Mary and John are twins, write your middle name under the tree, and if you have no middle name, put a zero there.' I'm never sure what my middle name is so I just gave up, and didn't try the rest."

The verbal and academic loading in intelligence tests is not as obvious or as humorous as this story suggests, but it does exist and it is a powerful determinant of the retardation and discouragement of the children and adolescents from the lower economic groups.

Word games, such as those in the test, phrased in standard English, are not familiar to low-status children. In fact, by the time they are two years old, the children from the lower socio-economic groups already are inferior in verbal skills to those from the middle class. It is inevitable, therefore, that even at this first grade level low-status children should perform less well on tests and on the verbal aspects of the curriculum.

Moreover, after the primary grades, the superiority of the middle-class child in verbal skills and academic habits increases faster than that of the low-status child. The reasons are clear: the pressure exerted by his parents, and the pace they and the teacher set for him, as well as his opportunities to learn language, also increase faster than similar pressures and opportunities of the low-status child. Thus, by the time these two cultural groups have reached the secondary school, the low-status students are farther behind the middle economic group of students than they have ever been. This retardation, as we euphemistically call it, exists in all areas of language and the curriculum.

The school cannot be expected to effect rapid changes in academic behavior which has been developing since the individual was a young child. Nor can the school quickly modify the students' social values and behavior which have been learned in the family and other institutions in our urban low-status communities. It is especially difficult to initiate such changes, furthermore, with the adolescent, for his academic habits of speech and of study, as well as the social habits of recreation, gang behavior and sexual exploration are already established.

Nevertheless, the school actually does stimulate changes in certain basic types of cultural behavior, such as clothing, food-habits, house-furnishing, manners, and even in occupational aspirations. Many a girl from a poor, working family is now a nurse, or a typist, or a receptionist in a medical office, or a clerk in business or government, because the high school raised her level of aspiration, and because the home-economics teacher or the teacher of business encouraged her to hope and to try. In most such cases, the teacher has said nothing, but the teacher's example, as well as her encouraging and accepting behavior toward the student has had its effect, sometimes years after the girl has graduated from high school.

Usually the school is the one place where the student from the slums has the chance to associate with and to want to become like a middle-class person. We have found that the powerful influence of the school and its goals often shows its effects upon the student ten or fifteen years after graduation. Often when the teacher thinks that the student has long ago failed, and been lost in the world of the slum, he learns that the student has become a nurse, the owner of a small business, or even a teacher! Simply because an adolescent receives a failing grade in an English or mathematics or biology course, one must not believe that he is certain to be a failure in the real world. The correlation between high school grades and later income is very low, (and possibly zero for the working class) just as the correlation between I.Q. and teacher's grades is only .3 (plus three). <u>Both the intelligence test and high school courses are poor predictors of later success in the world</u>, especially for

boys. In either of the cases mentioned above, the correlation would have to be .85 and preferably .9 to enable us to predict with any degree of accuracy in the cases of individual students.

IV

It seems clear that the first thing we have to do if we are to help these "retarded" students to change their attitudes toward themselves and toward the school work is to change our attitudes toward them. If they are to develop hope for their futures, and faith in their ability to achieve a useful life, we must have faith in them. No one does anything well in life, or even succeeds in holding himself together, unless he feels that someone has faith in them. No one does anything well in life, or even succeeds in holding himself together, unless he feels that someone has faith in him and in his ability to achieve.

But it is difficult for middle-class teachers to believe in lower-class students who are loud, aggressive, and uninterested in such fine cultural achievements as Browning's couplet:

"Irks care the crop-filled bird?
Frets doubt the maw-crammed beast?'

Incidentally, this couplet was used in a high school class in English grammar. The students were asked to find the subject and predicate--naturally!

In stimulating new learning in the academically retarded student, then, we need first a new relationship between the teacher and the student. The teacher will have to initiate this new relationship by trying to understand the student and his strange stigmatized culture.

The teacher also must remember that the processes by which human beings change their behavior (learn) are extremely complex, and are usually slow.

The major principles involved in the student's learning what the teacher has to teach may be stated as follows:

1. All learning is stimulated or hindered by the teacher's feeling toward the student. They must trust, and have faith in each other.
2. All school learning is influenced by the cultural evaluations which the teacher makes of the student, and which the student makes of the teacher. Often in rejecting the student's cultural background, the teacher appears to refect the student himself as a human being. In return, and as early as the first grade, the student may reject the culture of the school, and of the teacher.
3. All school-learning is influenced by the student's <u>cultural motivation</u>, by the degree of interest and drive with respect to schoolwork which the student has learned in his family and peer-group.
4. All school-learning is influenced by the presence, or absence, of intrinsic motivation in the curriculum itself. Neither the teacher nor the student can create interest in wordy rigamorole, such as Browning's "Irks care, etc." or in dull, unrealistic social studies or mathematics.

V

With regard to the present curriculum, teachers know that it is impossible to interest the majority of pupils of the lower socio-economic levels in the present texts such as the primers, and those in World History, or English composition, or the Family. They know that most of their time has to be given to discipline, because the curriculum has no reality or interest for the pupils. It is this over-all structure, consisting of a narrow academic curriculum, of equally narrow and outmoded kinds of tests, and boring unrealistic textbooks, which kills the ability and interest of most of these students.

Scientific studies at several universities have shown that students learn well only when the materials and readings genuinely interest them. The scientists only prove what every teacher already knows. No interest in the materials, no learning! In this respect, children are just like adults. No one does a job well unless it lights a fire in him.

Many scientific studies have shown, moreover, that speed in reading and in arithmetical processes has no relationship to the understanding of what is read, or to arithmetical reasoning. Yet the primary aim of the present curriculum is speed for its own sake, so that the student will perform well on the speeded achievement tests. This requires constant drill on meaningless tasks. The sole reason for this drilling for speed is to raise scores on so-called achievement tests.

Now that we have put our finger on the sources of our difficulties, perhaps we may take steps to meet them. If I may, I should life just to list several steps. If one succeeds in taking one of these steps, even tentatively, the way all of us have to create slowly any new kind of behavior -- we shall be leading the way, for much is said about these necessary improvements but little or nothing is done. These are the steps I should suggest:

(1) Study of the school's community. The teacher knows nothing about the actual values, motives, and feelings of the lower socio-economic community. The teacher or sometimes the faculty as a whole will be helped in understanding the behavior of their pupils if the faculty learns the basic facts of the family life and the culture of the people in that area. Teachers may learn these facts by individual case-studies or by informal talks with the pupils in their classes. Or the faculty, as a whole, may cooperate in a study, using census data on the community, and questionaires and interviews with parents and students.

(2) In-service training of teachers. All success in improving schools depends upon the willingness of teachers to learn from each other. To improve any aspect of teaching, or learning in the school, the administration must provide for serious in-service training of teachers. Groups of teachers should study not simply books dealing with cultural groups and adolescent interests, but teachers should analyze their own classroom experiences, the problems which they have met in their daily work. For any of the problems I have mentioned, there is no effective start toward a solution without the participation of the majority of the most influential teachers in prolonged in-service training programs.

(3) Reading. Here is an exciting opportunity for the sensitive alert and constructive teacher: (a) In learning the real interests and experiences of children and adolescents, and (b) in selecting stories and reading materials in the social studies and in psychology which will meet these interests. New reading materials of this realistic, exciting kind will not come usually from college and university professors. They will come chiefly from classroom teachers who are in daily contact with children and adolescents. Any alert teacher can find such stories or materials and test their value by use with her classes.

(4) The curriculum. What I have said of reading applies to the content of the rest of the curriculum. New materials in the social studies, foreign languages, home economics, and even mathematics, which deal with life realistically, as the pupils know it, are greatly needed, but I have seen few texts which have realism and interest for students. Only school staffs who know children and adolescents, their interests and communities, can select these new curricular materials. Let us have the eyes to observe our students, the interest to use our observations in finding pertinent materials, and the courage to use them in experimental form, as a part of classroom work. We have had 30 years of talk about a new realistic curriculum. Where *is* the new curriculum? We want to develop it, and write it -- not talk about it.

(5) Teaching method. Discussion and participation: this is another field in which much has been said and little done. We need a method by which the students of all groups, and all socio-economic levels will be drawn into classroom discussions in each subject. At present, the teacher usually fears to allow the low-status students to talk freely; she is afraid of their English, or of the subjects they raise out of real life, or of her own reactions. But the best classes I have seen in the hundreds of schools I have visited have been those in which there was free discussion.

(6) Integration of all groups into school activities. The integration of all groups, both in classroom-activities and in extra-curricular activities is the test of human relations, and of the democratic ladder in any school. We must see to it that all groups participate in all types of activities, not simply in athletics, but also in drama, in the orchestra, and in the status-organizations of the school.

VI

Finally, it is important to see the problems of the culturally deprived in-migrant and slum groups in their total social and economic matrix. This I have tried to do briefly in this paper. But I have omitted the factor of cultural change. With fuller employment, the upgrading of workers from these groups, and the gradually increasing social opportunities which increased wages afford, the basic process of cultural change, or acculturation, is being accelerated. It is this complex and widening process of cultural change in the lower economic groups which is exerting the most powerful force upon the child and adolescent.

For we must remember that the family, the peer group and the neighborhood are the ultimate determinants of most of the non-adaptive behavior of these students in the schools. The school helps change these cultural values and behaviors of the family, but like any basic cultural change, the effects of the school become apparent only over a generation or two. Such programs as those in New York and Detroit may be realistic and effective for some individuals, but they cannot, of course, change the basic economic and cultural patterns of the lower income community. We should not expect minor changes in the curriculum, nor individual conferences with a few students, nor limited work programs to solve most of the problems of the culturally deprived masses of students. Only changes in the family as a socializing agency, and in the structure of education, will accomplish this deep and wide re-motivation and re-orientation of the culturally deprived masses.

In this broader process, which is called acculturation, the school has an important function, however. If one studies the communities of the foreign born, he recognizes the basic changes in their standard of living and way of life, which are learned chiefly in the school. But it requires time. The

school is an important part of the huge network of economic and cultural forces which ARE CHANGING THE MOTIVATION AND THE ASPIRATION OF THE LOW-STATUS GROUPS. Not only teachers and schools are aiding in this sweeping process, but also the new standards of living, new desires for better housing, better food, more adequate medical care, better jobs, and better communities and schools for their children. This mighty process of acculturation and the increasingly available economic and social roles for these groups is developing the motivation, the new goals and the desire to attain them, which stimulates the use of the abilities by students and by adults.

It is in the air, in the spirit of the time; it leaps across the artificial barriers of residential and school districting; it moves which the school is asleep or marking time. The process of acculturation which is raising the standard of living and lifting the aspirations of the masses in America cannot be stopped, although it is being impeded. Its moving is inevitable because all the new experiences of the immigrant, all the new things which he sees and wants for himself, as well as the new concept and role of a human being which he finds in the city teach him new values and give him new drives. It is only these terms of acculturation that one can begin to understand the tremendous efforts of the Negro Americans, after nearly fourteen generations in America, for full participation in the public, economic, political and cultural life of the United States.

In this highly complex process of acculturation, which operates over decades and generations, the teachers and the schools have labored hard, though at times blindly. Teachers have made sacrifices, have given their hearts to their work, but often have been discouraged. Looking at the results of their hard, nerve-wracking work in one class period, or one semester, or one year, they sometimes have felt that [illegible] the best [illegible]

are about a year behind the white lowest economic group in reading, and 5 points lower in I.Q. at age 10.

But both groups have improved markedly in the last generation. The average I.Q. of white children of unskilled and semi-skilled parents in Chicago is 102.3, that is, actually above the national average for all children. [3] The average I.Q. of Negro children born in Philadelphia is 97.[4] Klineberg and Lee have shown, moreover, that the I.Q.'s of Negro children born in the South, improve steadily with length of residence in New York or Philadelphia.[5] This trend is statistically significant and continuous. Such improvement, in an overall measure of educational aptitude, indicates the great power of acculturation, both in the school and in the community.

The time, however, is short in our economic competition with Russia. We need to accelerate the pace of acculturation of these groups in our schools.

What we, as teachers, must always remember is that man is a learner. No matter now handicapped he may be, he still possesses the highest of human capacities, the ability to improve himself by learning. No man, woman or child is ever so far down that, given the opportunity, he cannot learn his way up.

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1. Kenneth Eells, Allison Davis, Robert J. Havighurst, Virgil E. Herrick and Ralph W. Tyler, under the chairmanship of Allison Davis, Intelligence and Cultural Differences (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1951), 112.
2. Robert Daniel Hess, An Experimental Culture-Fair Test of Mental Ability (unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Committee of Human Development, the University of Chicago, 1950), p. 97.
3. R. D. Hess, Op. cit., p. 91.
4. Everett S. Lee, "Negro Intelligence and Selective Migration," American Sociological Review, Vol. 16 (1951), p. 231.
5. Otto Klineberg, Negro Intelligence and Selective Migration (New York: Columbia University Press, 1935) p. 59. Also E. S. Lee, Op. cit., pp. 231-232.

But the sacrifices have not been in vain. Time and work are telling. In just one generation, the I.Q. of Negro children in Philadelphia and Chicago has increased about ten points. Furthermore, as revealed by Special Monograph, No. 10, Volume 1, on Special Groups, by the Selective Service System (1953, Washington, D. C., Government Printing Office, p. 147) the Negroes drafted in Illinois and New York had a far lower rate of failure on the Educational test used by Selective Services than did the whites in 15 southern states. The percentage of Negroes passing the educational test in Illinois was 97.5% and in New York City is was 97.6% - in both cases higher than the percentage of whites passing the test in Virginia, West Virginia, North Carolina, South Carolina, Georgia, Mississippi, Alabama, Louisiana, Texas, Arkansas, Florida, Kentucky, Oklahoma, Tennessee, and New Mexico. Moreover, the Negroes in Illinois, New York City, and Massachusetts had a higher percentage passing the test than did whites in several northern states, including Connecticut and Kansas. This examination was designed to eliminate only the definitely retarded, so that the evidence is that in some Northern states there is a lower rate of retardation among Negroes than there is among whites in all southern states. This rise in I.Q. and decline in educational retardation must be attributed to the capacity of Negroes to learn well, when their educational and cultural environment is improved. Similar changes are taking place in work skills and in community organization.

We know that a third of the white children of unskilled and semi-skilled families in a Midwestern city already are retarded in grade-placement by the time they are 9 and 10 years old.[1] By the time white children from these lowest occupational groups are in their tenth year, they are about two years behind the children from the top occupational families in reading,[2] and 10 points lower in I.Q. ratings. Negro children of the lowest economic group